

# Final Report

## Contribution to the Dialogue on Public Spaces in Sri Lanka

### Background

An important aspect of the HealthBridge Livable Cities program is advocacy around maintaining, improving, and creating usable public space. Public space in cities is connected directly to NCD prevention, through attractive opportunities for physical activity, and to overall health and wellbeing. However, in densely-populated and rapidly growing Asian cities, it is difficult to maintain and preserve, much less expand, such places.

In the specific context of Sri Lanka, the Urban Development Authority (UDA) is under the Ministry of Defence, which is actively creating new public spaces throughout the Greater Colombo area. Many of these public spaces are in places only accessible by car, and their design often encourages only two uses: walking and sitting. Many of the older public spaces, meanwhile, are accessible from nearby residences by foot, and/or are accessible by public transit, allowing for a wider range of users (especially in terms of income level). Their design typically facilitates a greater range of uses as well.

Input to the UDA on public spaces required some research to illustrate the qualities of a successful public space, in order to use successful ones as a benchmark for success, and also the testing of tools that can then be used to assess other public spaces.

In order to provide input into public space policy in the cities in which HealthBridge works, staff have developed and, with local NGOs, modified and utilized a set of tools that allow for qualitative and quantitative assessments of existing public spaces. The tools consist of a public space audit (what infrastructure is available, including benches, lighting, play equipment, toilets, and trash bins), an activity audit (what sorts of activities take place in the public space, including exercise, socializing, and selling), and surveys of users and non-users. Different versions of these tools have been used or are being used in Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam.

This project set out to adapt, test, and utilize the tools in the Sri Lanka context, looking specifically at public spaces in Mount Lavinia (a suburb of Colombo) with a particular focus on the Mount Lavinia beach, which functions as a highly successful linear neighbourhood park. The study was carried out in collaboration with the Department of Town & Country Planning at the University of Moratuwa, reputed to be the foremost university in the country, with various individuals contributing their time and/or resources.

### Goal

The overall goal of the project was to contribute to the public space discussion currently underway in Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on the need to ensure that public spaces encourage a wide range of activities (various forms of physical activity, socializing, and economic activity) and attract a wide range of users (for both sexes, different income groups and ages).

### **Progress Towards Meeting Immediate Outcomes**

<i>Planned immediate outcome</i>	<i>Progress towards achievement</i>
1. Increased awareness among policy makers, urban planners, and the media about the importance of parks and what makes a quality park for a variety of users.	It is difficult to state whether awareness increased, but we were able to generate public debate involving policy makers, urban planners, and the media about the quality and important attributes of public spaces. Specifically, we engaged the Urban Development Authority (UDA) and the Municipal Council in Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia.
2. Interest and participation by an NGO partner in Sri Lanka to work on Livable Cities issues.	We were not successful at engaging an NGO partner, though individuals working for NGOs did participate.
3. Interest and participation by a local university in Sri Lanka to work on Livable Cities issues.	We were successful in engaging the Department of Town & Country Planning at the University of Moratuwa in this project. Students carried out the research and helped with the dissemination seminar. One student proceeded to do her individual research project on public spaces in Colombo, inspired by this research. We thus also succeeded in increasing interest in conducting this type of research, and the capacity to do so.

### **Intermediate Outcomes**

Although it is not expected that this one initiative will lead to our intermediate outcomes, successful completion of the activities and the immediate outcomes can be expected to contribute to achieving the following intermediate outcomes:

1. Increased number of public spaces that are safe, comfortable, convenient and fun for a wide variety of users.
2. Increased number of people using public spaces including women, children, the elderly and the disabled of different income groups.

### **Activities: planned and achieved**

As shown in the table below, we not only carried out all of our planned activities but, in some cases (the extent of the research, the publication of a Sinhala version of the report, and the launch of the Sinhala version) exceeded our plans.

<i>Planned activities</i>	<i>Achieved activities</i>
In collaboration with the University of Moratuwa, adapt, pre-test, and further adapt the existing public space research tools being used by HealthBridge in other Asian cities.	The HealthBridge research tools were adapted, pre-tested, and further adapted, with the assistance of the university of Moratuwa. This activity included a full-day training of six university volunteers.
Conduct a full activity audit at Mount Lavinia Beach (one half-day on Saturday, one full-day on Sunday, and at least a half-day on a weekday).	We carried out three full-day activity audits: a Saturday, a Sunday, and a Monday, from roughly 6 am to 7 pm each day.
Conduct a public space audit of approximately five public spaces in Mount Lavinia, including the beach and various parks.	We conducted audits on three separate occasions of Mount Lavinia beach, as well as of various other parks in Mount Lavinia-Dehiwala (that information was not included in the report).
Interview approximately 250 users of the beach using the user survey form.	We interviewed 371 people.
Conduct in-depth interviews with (if possible) several users of the beach, the deputy mayor of Mount Lavinia, and the social specialist at UDA.	We conducted several in-depth interviews with beach users, and one with the Deputy Mayor of Mount Lavinia. We were not able to interview anyone from UDA, though we did try repeatedly to arrange an interview.
Analyse the research, create graphics, take photographs, and prepare, print, and disseminate a reader-friendly report.	We did the analysis, created graphics, took photographs, prepared, checked, and printed the report. We hired a translator to prepare a Sinhala version, which was also printed. Both reports were then widely disseminated (704 in Sinhala and 940 in English, of 1,000 printed in each language), to libraries (public, research, university, and institutional), local government bodies and institutes, INGOs/NGOs, hotels, associations, foundations, schools, at events, and to individuals. The report went to over 100 countries, as part of an international book exchange with Sri Lankan libraries, and by dissemination to NGOs and others. (See Appendix 3.)

Conduct a seminar, in collaboration with the University of Moratuwa and CEPA, to disseminate the report, with policymakers, urban planners, journalists.	We conducted a seminar attended by about 70 people, at which we had the esteemed Professor Carlo Fonseka as well as other high-level people (the Deputy Mayor of Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, the social specialist from UDA, and a prominent architect). Various senior planners as well as other interested professionals, and some members of the general public, attended the event. We also gained significant press coverage, including three large newspaper articles and a 30-minute TV interview that aired repeatedly and was posted on the Internet.
Look into longer-term collaboration on this work with the University of Moratuwa.	We anticipate working with the University of Moratuwa on a student research project to try to rehabilitate a virtually unused park in Mount Lavinia (Mount Park).
(Unanticipated event)	In addition, we conducted a launch of the Sinhala version of the report at the beach. About 25 people, including our volunteers/staff, attended. Although it was not well-attended, those who came talked for a long time (quality vs. quantity).
(Unanticipated event)	Professor Carlo Fonseka gave a copy of our report to the Secretary of Defence, who is in charge of the Urban Development Authority. They discussed the book at a personal meeting, and the Secretary later sent a message about the book, via a staff member, to one of the authors.

### Outputs

<i>Planned output</i>	<i>Actual output</i>
A set of research tools adapted for Sri Lanka, including a Sinhala-language user survey form	Tools adapted and used, including Sinhala-language user survey form.

A research report (intended for advocacy purposes) on public spaces in Mount Lavinia (particularly the beach)	Report printed in English and Sinhala.
An abstract and potentially a presentation at Walk21 in Munich, September 2013	Abstract submitted and accepted; presentation given at Walk21.
Media attention	A Facebook page was established ( <a href="https://www.facebook.com/MountLaviniaBeach">https://www.facebook.com/MountLaviniaBeach</a> ), a 30-minute TV interview was shown repeatedly ( <a href="http://vimeo.com/71083442">http://vimeo.com/71083442</a> ), and three newspapers interviewed the authors and featured the results in the paper.

### Timeline

The English version of the report was printed in July 2013 and the seminar was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July (only one month behind schedule and a remarkable achievement given that we only started in February and both Udan and Debra were away for about half the period of the project). Preparing the Sinhala version of the report (which we did not originally plan to do), and particularly doing the corrections, took months, and was not printed till early February 2014, with the launch organized on 8 Feb, 2014. By the end of March, most of the books were disseminated.

### Lessons learned

- ☐ When relying on volunteers, it is important to realize that it is difficult to enforce your own time line. Volunteers require flexibility, and can make meeting deadlines difficult.
- ☐ When designing/adapting the research tools, it is very important to plan the analysis at that time. Although we attempted to do so, it did not happen. As a result, we collected far more data than we could analyze. Due to failure to recruit someone to help with the entry and analysis, we were forced to use Excel for the data analysis, which was definitely not ideal, as it was both cumbersome and increased the likelihood of making mistakes.

### Budget

The actual budget varied considerably from the anticipated budget. We did not plan for the translation and printing into Sinhala, and we saved considerable money on the seminar by holding it at a government rather than a private venue.

The main in-kind contributions attained were the time of Udan Fernando (co-researcher and writer), Professor Jagath Munasinghe of the University of Moratuwa, and the others

who contributed to the seminar. Other anticipated in-kind contributions failed to materialize, such as CEPA's contribution to the seminar and the pro-bono photographer and statistical analysis.

The project will go somewhat over budget, as the original budget did not include printing of the Sinhala version, and management was under-budgeted. To date, the remaining costs are mainly for book dissemination and for a final seminar to discuss public spaces issues (to be held in the summer or later).

#### Final remarks

The project was overall a great success. We were able to generate a good deal of attention to the study and, in general, the issue of public spaces. Debate at our first launch was heated, and the representative from UDA suggested that we go present to the UDA staff on some future occasion. We obtained significant media coverage, both televised and print. The Municipal Council of Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia was enthusiastic about the book, which they say they are using in their dialogues with UDA about the beach and public spaces in general. The Mount Lavinia Hotel Association showed great interest in the book, in part because of a threatened (and probably non-existent) project to create a new, luxury beach resort nearby which would likely harm their business. In any case, a report is now available, in English and Sinhala, which documents the attractiveness of Mount Lavinia Beach, the qualities of a great public space, and the tools that can be used to measure a great space. The Department of Town & Country Planning at the University of Moratuwa is also now in a position to carry out future research.

We were also extremely successful in disseminating the books, with a good part of the 1,000 copies in each language distributed near the end of the project (the remaining books will be distributed in a small second phase to further publicize the information and encourage discussion on the issues). The success at dissemination was largely due to the initiative taken by our administrative person, Mr. Trevor Wanniachy.

A more ambitious plan, based on this study, was to continue to use the tools to evaluate other public spaces, and to work more closely with UDA and the University of Moratuwa in those efforts. Difficulties getting colleagues to commit time, and difficulties in the Regional Director's frequent absences from Sri Lanka and other time commitments, made a more ambitious program difficult to achieve. There is also a difficult politics in Sri Lanka in that UDA is under the Ministry of Defence, which is not particularly keen to hear about its shortcomings. Without the participation of a local NGO, it was not possible to take things further, and efforts to find such an NGO proved fruitless.

In any case, this project, though not followed up on, should still be of utility to the country.

## Appendix 1. Photos

### 1. Conducting the research, February 2014



### 2. Dissemination seminar, 30 July 2013



Carlo Fonseka presenting; audience



Presentations by Deputy Mayor (left) and Head, Town & Country Planning, University of Moratuwa (right)



Presentations by Ministry of Defence (left) and activist-architect (right)



Presentations by Udan Fernando (left) and audience member



Presenting book to Deputy Mayor of Dehiwala-Mt. Lavinia; volunteers and study authors

### 3. Beach launch, 8 February 2014





Staff at the beach launch



## Appendix 2. Sample news coverage

# Daily News

Sri Lanka's National Newspaper Since 1918

Friday, July 12, 2013 (All day)

Features

## Public spaces for the common good

Dilshan Boange



Architecture defines to a great extent 'who' a country's people are in the eyes of an outsider. Although a country which is not even half a millennia old yet, as a nation the founders of the USA had given much through to what their nation will speak to the world through the architecture that stands impressively in their capital -Washington D.C.

Memorialisation is also a very central element in State planned topography that will demarcate 'spaces' for commemoration of what is valued in a country's narrative of its civilisation. What I wish to discuss in this article is to do with what I learnt from a conversation one evening with two persons who are conscious of the need for 'public spaces' that contribute to a community's communal bonding and help improve an individual's mental health. Udan Fernando and Debra Efroymson are regular visitors to the Mount Lavinia beach and they have seen what great value it has as a 'public space' which functions smoothly with hardly any institutional supervision involved.

After hearing engineer Rohan Seneviratne, Additional Secretary (Technical), Urban Development Authority (UDA) and Project Director, Metro Colombo Urban Development Project at a forum on how the government is now placing emphasis on creating public spaces as part of the post-conflict development plan, Debra had been inspired to make an initiative to do a study on the functional aspect of what would be an ideal public space.

### Social stratification

Together with Udan, the two of them had identified the merits of the Mount Lavinia beach that reveals its idealness as a public space that has come into function without any barriers of class or other forms of social stratification involved. A research study had been embarked upon with the help of Dr. Jagath Munasinghe, Head, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Moratuwa and has now culminated in an upcoming publication titled Public Space and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach. The report is to be launched on July 30 and what is hoped thereafter is for active dialogue between the authorities to consider various aspects that contribute towards developing successful public spaces.

Can a public space be created through policy decisions or does it get created gradually through nondescript citizens finding a particular geographic location conducive to spend some time away from

the tedium of their routine which could be either severely housebound or tied to office work? A public space of course would mean a place that is accessible to all with no entry fee involved or stipulations of

spending for purchases, be it food and beverages or items for kids amusement. Looking at the locations in and around the greater Colombo area one could say that both policy decisions and gradual common communal usage can create public spaces.

#### Urban landscape

Arguably Colombo's best known public space today is the Galle Face green. The dedication of that stretch of land overlooking the sea to the 'Ladies and Children of Colombo' by the British Governor Sir Henry Ward can be seen as possibly the first ever public space being created by a policy decision. Declaring a patch of land as a public space is one thing, but then how does it gain its 'character' in terms of being topographically moulded to suit the urban landscape? This is where active human intervention comes in, which can be either institutional or through gradual public participation that would result in structures coming on the scene.

#### Tourist attractions

Thanks to the present Urban Development Authority, the capital city of Kotte, of which I am a constituent, has today two remarkably spectacular public spaces, located in Kotte near the Diyawannawa and in Nugegoda. These are not only used and appreciated by the joggers and walkers but also families and youth who find great respite being in the salubrious settings. I was made ware by Debra that spaces such as these in the jargon related to town and city planning are called 'scripted public spaces' whereas a place like the Mount Lavinia beach would qualify to the definition of 'unscripted public spaces'.

With our growing schemes of urbanisation the need for public spaces to ensure citizens have spaces that have good accessibility and with the right 'ingredients' that facilitate a calm and safe environment to relax their minds is a need that cannot be negated.

From my point of view with the bolstered policy decisions to promote tourism round the country that now includes the greater Colombo area shaping most potential spaces in a touristy glow to serve as tourist attractions may not necessarily serve the needs of the citizens of that locale.

Gaggles of camera clad tourists clicking their cameras at the landscape where citizens are enjoying some quality leisure time can be irritating to those who value their privacy and appreciate the harmonious ambience that helps find peace of mind.

The government of the day is achieving remarkable strides in terms of urban planning and city beautification. These are the fruits of defeating a three decade long separatist war that crippled our chances to enhance public life. But the pursuit of economic goals must be realised through policies that are integrated with the needs for 'citizens' wellness' that is outside the scope of economic well being.

Through hearing the pulse of the citizenry and dialoguing to realise their aspirations in terms of workable, salutary urban topography beneficial to all, the administrators and constituents will surely further the goals of 'people's government'.

**Appendix 3.** Distribution lists (xx is used to indicate that no copies in that language were given in that place)

**Approximate Summary of Dissemination**

Ref. No	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Public Libraries	147	124
2	Research Libraries	08	08
3	University Libraries	26	33
4	University Institutional Libraries	02	02
5	Statutory Boards, Depts., Local Govt. Councils & Institutes	67	53
6	INGOs / NGOs	10	82
7	Associations / Foundations	402	282
8	Schools	17	08
9	Hotels	02	41
10	Events / Individuals	23	307
	Total Distributed	704	940

**1. Public Libraries**

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Colombo Public Library, Sir Marcus Fernando Mw, Colombo 7	15	06
2	Dehiwala – Mount Lavinia Central Library, Frazer Av, Dehiwala	13	03
3	Janasetha Cultural Center Public Library, MC, Katubedda, Moratuwa	18	09
4	Sri Jayawardenapura – Kotte Public Library, Rajagiriya	06	06
5	D.S. Senanayake Memorial Public Library, Kandy	01	01
6	Public Library, Municipal Council, (MC) Matale	01	01
7	Public Library, MC, Nuwara Eliya	01	01
8	Public Library, MC, Kalmunai	01	01

9	Public Library, MC, Batticaloa	xx	01
10	Public Library, MC, Maithripala Senanayake Mw, Anuradhapura	01	01
11	Public Library, MC, Kandy Rd, Kandy Rd, Jaffna	xx	01
12	Public Library, MC, Ratnapura	01	01
13	Dr. Richard Pathirana Public Library, MC, Wakwella Rd, Galle	01	01
14	Kumaratunge Munidasa Public Library, MC, Matara	01	01
15	Public Library, MC, Gampaha	02	02
16	Public Library, MC, Thelwatta Junction, Negombo	01	01
17	Public Library, MC, Kurunegala	01	01
18	Public Library, Urban Council, (UC) Ampara	01	01
19	Public Library, UC, Trincomalee	01	01
20	Public Library, UC, Thumalei Rd, Point Pedro	xx	01
21	Public Library, UC, Main St, Mannar	xx	01
22	Public Library, UC, Chavakachcheri	xx	01
23	Public Library, UC, Vavuniya	01	01
24	I M R A Iriyagolla Siyawasa Public Library, UC, Kuliyaipitiya	01	01
25	Public Library, UC, Puttalam	01	01
26	Public Library, UC, Chilaw	01	01
27	Public Library, UC, Kegalle	01	01
28	Public Library, UC, Balangoda	01	01
29	Public Library, UC, Embilipitiya	01	01
30	Public Library, UC, Ambalangoda	01	01
31	Public Library, UC, Hikkaduwa	01	01
32	Public Library, UC, Tissa Rd, Hambantota	01	01
33	Public Library, UC, Tangalle	01	01
34	Public Library, UC, Weligama	01	01
35	G H Perera Memorial Public Library, UC, Boralesgamuwa	01	01
36	Public Library, Kesbewa UC, Piliyandala	01	01
37	Public Library, UC, Kolonnawa	01	01

38	Public Library, UC, Maharagama	01	01
39	Public Library, Seethawakapura UC, Avissawella	01	01
40	Robert Gunawardena Memorial Public Library, UC, Kaduwela	01	01
41	Public Library, UC, Ja-Ela	01	01
42	Public Library, Katunayake-Seeduwa UC, Seeduwa	01	01
43	Public Library, UC, Minuwangoda	01	01
44	Public Library, UC, Peliyagoda	01	01
45	Public Library, Wattala-Mabola UC, Wattala	01	01
46	Public Library, UC, Beruwala	01	01
47	Gnana Pradeepa Public Library, UC, Horana	01	01
48	Public Library, UC, Kalutara	01	01
49	Migettuwatte Gunananda Memorial Public Library, UC, Panadura	01	01
50	Public Library, UC, Gampola	01	01
51	Public Library, UC, Kadugannawa	01	01
52	Public Library, UC, Nawalapitiya	01	01
53	Public Library, UC, Wattegama	01	01
54	Public Library, UC, Hatton	01	01
55	Dudley Senanayake Memorial Public Library, Talawakele – Lindula UC	01	01
56	Public Library, Pradeshiya Sabbha (PS), Meda Dumbara, Meda Mahanuwara	01	01
57	Public Library, PS, Mahawatta, Kundasale	01	01
58	Public Library, PS, Galewela	01	01
59	Public Library, PS, Uhana	01	01
60	Public Library, PS, Medirigiriya	01	01
61	Public Library, Lankapura PS, Thalpota, Polonnaruwa	01	01
62	Moragolla Public Library, Paathahewaheta PS, Nugaliyadda	01	01
63	Weera Denzil Kobbekaduwa Public Library, Yatinuwara PS, Pilimathalawa	01	01
64	Diyatilaka Public Library, PS, Hanguranketha	01	01
65	Public Library, Thamankaduwa PS, Polonnaruwa	01	01

66	Public Library, PS, Bingiriya	01	01
67	Public Library, PS, Ibbagamuwa	01	01
68	Public Library, PS, Maho	01	01
69	Premachandra Memorial Public Library, PS, Mawathagama	01	01
70	Public Library, PS, Polgahawela	01	01
71	Public Library, PS, Wariyapola	01	01
72	Public Library, PS, Nattandiya	01	01
73	Yagampattuwa Public Library, Chilaw PS, Kurunegala Rd, Madampe	01	01
74	Public Library, PS, Wennappuwa	01	01
75	Public Library, PS, Mawanella	01	01
76	Public Library, PS, Yatiyantota	01	01
77	Central Library, PS, Kahatagastenna, Ruwanwella	01	01
78	Public Library, PS, Kuruwita	01	01
79	Public Library, PS, Bentota	01	01
80	Dheerananda Public Library, Habaraduwa PS, Ahangama	01	01
81	Totagamuwa Thiranagama Public Library, Naarigama, Hikkaduwa	01	01
82	Public Library, PS, Aluthwala, Ambalangoda	01	01
83	Public Library, PS, Beliatta	01	01
84	Public Library, PS, Weeraketiya	01	01
85	Kumaratunga Munidasa Public Library, PS, Mahawala Rd, Dikwella	01	01
86	Bandaranayake Public Library, PS, Homagama	01	01
87	Public Library, Attanagalla PS, Nittambuwa	01	01
88	Public Library, PS, Biyagama	01	01
89	Public Library, PS, Divulapitiya	01	01
90	Public Library, PS, Dompe	01	01
91	Public Library, Ja-ela PS, Ragama	01	01
92	Naranwala Public Library, Mahara PS, Ranmuthugala, Kadawatha	01	01
93	Public Library, PS, Hendala, Wattala	01	01
94	Public Library, PS, Ranna, Tangalle	01	01

95	Public Library, Beruwala PS, Aluthgama	01	01
96	Public Library, PS, Nikaweratiya	01	01
97	Rajagura Sri Subhuti Public Library, Kalutara PS, Galle Rd, Waskaduwa	01	01
98	Public Library, PS, Baddegama	01	01
99	Public Library, Beruwala PS, Payagala	01	01
100	Public Library, PS, Dodangoda	01	01
101	Public Library, Panadura PS, Wadduwa	01	01
102	Public Library, Horana PS, Padukka Rd, Ingiriya	01	01
103	Wijayasiri Memorial Public Library, Kuliyaipitiya PS, Katupota	01	01

## 2. Research Libraries

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Dept. of National Museums, Sir Marcus Fernando Mw, Colombo 7	01	01
2	National Institute of Sports Science, Independence Av, Colombo 07	01	01
3	National Science Foundation, Vidya Mw, Colombo 07	01	01
4	Social Scientists' Association, Sulaiman Terrace, Colombo 07	01	01
5	National Library Services & Documentation Board, (N L S & D B) Colombo 07	04	04

## 3. University Libraries

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Eastern University, Chankaladi, Batticaloa	xx	01
2	Wayamba University, Kuliyaipitiya	01	01
3	Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda	01	01
4	Open University Regional Center, Polgolla, Kandy	01	01
5	Open University Regional Center, Nupe, Matara	01	01
6	Open University Regional Center, Jayanthi Mw, Anuradhapura	01	01
7	Open University Regional Center, Browns Rd, Kokuvil, Jaffna	xx	01

8	Open University Regional Center, New Rd, Batticaloa	xx	01
9	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, Anuradhapura	01	01
10	Sabaragamuwa University, Belihuloya	01	01
11	South Eastern University, Oluwil	xx	01
12	University of Colombo, Colombo 07	01	01
13	Sripalee Campus, Wewala, Horana	01	01
14	University of Jaffna, Thirunelvely, Jaffna	xx	01
15	Vavuniya Campus, Jaffna	xx	01
16	University of Kelaniya, Dalugama, Kelaniya	01	01
17	University of Peradeniya, Kandy	01	01
18	University of Ruhuna, Wellamadama, Matara	01	01
19	University of Sri Jayawardenapura, Nugegoda	01	01
20	Uva Wellassa University, Passara Rd, Badulla	01	01
21	Open University Study Center (OUSC), Main St, Trincomalee	xx	01
22	OUSC, Inginiyagala Rd, Samanpura, Ampara	01	01
23	OUSC, Kandy Rd, Thekkawaththai, Vavuniya	xx	01
24	OUSC, Colombo Rd, Puttalam	01	01
25	OUSC, Potuvil Rd, Sirigala, Monaragala	01	Xx
26	OUSC, Polwatte Rd, Halwatura, Ambalangoda	01	01
27	OUSC, Kumaratunge Munidasa Mw, Kegalle	01	01
28	OUSC, Advanced Technical Institute, Badulla	01	01
29	OUSC, Negombo Rd, Malkaduwa, Kurunegala	01	01
30	OUSC, St. Thomas' Rd, Wewtenna, Bandarawela	01	01
31	OUSC, Nagoda, Kalutara	01	01
32	OUSC, Hidellena, Ratnapura	01	01
33	OUSC, Technical College, Kuliypitiya	01	01
34	OUSC, Gampaha Rd, Miriswatte, Mudungoda	01	01

#### 4. University Institutional Libraries

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
01	Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Kandy	01	01
02	National Center for Advanced Studies in Humanities, Colombo 07	01	01

#### 5. Statutory Boards, Depts., Local Govt. Councils & Institutes

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Urban Development Authority, Colombo	xx	10
2	Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia Municipal Council, Dehiwala	04	03
3	Gampaha Municipal Council, Gampaha	03	03
4	Dept. of Coast Conservation, New Secretariat, Colombo 10.	01	01
5	Coast Guard Headquarters, Ramakrishna Rd, Colombo 06	01	01
6	Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Colombo 03	01	01
7	Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management, Colombo 03	01	01
8	Institute of Construction, Training & Development, Colombo 07	01	01
9	Institute of Town Planners, Prof. Stanley Wijesundera Mw, Colombo	01	01
10	National Institute of Social Development, Rajagiriya	01	01
11	Institute of Architects, Vidya Mw, Colombo 07	01	01
12	Institute of Engineers of Sri Lanka, Wijerama Mw, Colombo 07	01	01
13	National Center for Advanced Studies in Humanities, Ward Pl, Colombo 7	01	01
14	Provincial Library Services Board, Uva Province, Racecourse Rd, Badulla	50	25
15	Coast Guard Post, College Av, Mt. Lavinia	xx	02

#### 6. INGOs/NGOs/other international distribution

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	HealthBridge, Canada	xx	50
2	World Health Organization, Colombo	xx	06

3	Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka, Station Rd, Dehiwala	01	01
4	Sarvodaya, Rawatawatta Rd. Moratuwa	01	01
5	Sevanatha Urban Resource Center, Nawala, Rajagiriya	01	01
6	Marga Institute, Kotte Rd. Ethul Kotte	01	01
7	SOS Children's Village of Sri Lanka, Piliyandala	01	01
8	Human Care Foundation, Dematagoda, Colombo 09	01	01
9	Community Concern Society, Aponso Av, Dehiwala	01	01
10	Care International, Isipathana Mw, Colombo 05	01	01
11	Practical Action, Kirulapone, Colombo 05	01	01
12	E M L Consultants, Davidson Rd, Colombo 04	01	01
13	University Sains Malaysia, Penang	xx	01
14	Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, Dhaka	xx	10
15	Various local government offices in Hue, Hoi An, and Hanoi, Vietnam	xx	05

### 7. Associations/ Foundations

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Poonam Foundation, Colombo 08	xx	01
2	Mount Lavinia Hoteliers' Association, Mt. Lavinia	xx	15
3	Janatha Pragathi Library & Arts Society, Haltota, Bandaragama	01	xx
4	Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, Vidya Mw, Colombo 07	01	01
5	N L S & D B – International & National Book Exchange Programme, Ind Av, Colombo 07	50	125
6	N L S & D B – Schools Distribution Programme, Ind Av, Colombo 07	300	50
7	2013 Final Year Students' Batch, Town & Country Dept, Moratuwa University	50	90

### 8. Schools

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	S. Thomas' College, Hotel Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
2	Girls High School, Hotel Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
3	Buddhist Girls School, Station Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
4	Colombo South Science College, Templers Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
5	Lalith Athulathmudali M V, Hena Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
6	Holy Family Convent, Galle Rd, Dehiwala	01	01
7	Presbyterian Girls School, Major L V Gunaratne Mw, Dehiwala	01	01
8	S De S Jayasinghe M M V, Anagarika Dharmapala Mw, Dehiwala	01	01
9	St. Mary's College, Atapattu Mw, Dehiwala	01	xx
10	Buddhaghosha M V, Kalubowila Rd, Dehiwala	01	xx
11	Shastrananda M V, Broadway, Kawdana Rd, Dehiwala	01	xx
12	Sumaga Vidyalaya, Union Pl, Karagampitiya, Dehiwala	01	xx
13	Buddhaghosha Vidyalaya, Malapella	02	xx
14	Uthuru Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipitiya	02	xx
15	Sangamiththa M V, Matale	01	xx

### 9. Hotels

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	Mt. Lavinia Apartments, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	xx	02
2	Sea Side Inn, College Av, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
3	Ocean View Tour Inn, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	01	01
4	Palm Beach Hotel, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01
5	Ranveli Beach Resort, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01
6	Royce Boutique Hotel, Barnes Av, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01
7	Tropic Inn Hotel, 30, College Av, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01
8	Berjaya Hotel, College Av, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01
9	Hotel Sunhill, Station Rd, Mt. Lavinia	xx	01

10	Blue Seas Guest House, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
11	House of Arts, Beach Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
12	Lavinia House, Simon Abeywickreme Av, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
13	Lavinia Villa, Dharmapala Mw, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
14	Riviras Hotel, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
15	Lavina Breeze Hotel, De Alwis Av, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
16	Beverly Hills Hotel, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
17	The White Nest, Hotel Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
18	Ivory Inn, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
19	Mount Air Inn, Station Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
20	Blue Seas Guest House, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
21	Lihiniya Sea View Hotel, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
22	Mount Waves Hotel, Off De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
23	Mount Lodge, Hotel Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
24	Saltaire Beach Resort, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
25	Sea Breeze Hotel, De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
26	Mount Breeze Hotel, Off De Seram Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
27	Sunset Beach Inn, De Alwis Av, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
28	Sea Spray Beach Resort, Vihara Rd, Off Station Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
29	Hotel Haus Chandra, Beach Rd, Mt. Lavinia	XX	01
30	Mount Lavinia Relaxon Hotel, Hotel Rd, Mt. Lavinia	Xx	01
31	Auburn Inn, Auburn Side, Dehiwala	XX	01
32	New Siloam Guest House, Frazer Av, Dehiwala	XX	01
33	Hotel Ocean Beach, Muhandiram Ln, Dehiwala	XX	01
34	Hotel Concord, Galle Rd, Dehiwala	XX	01
35	Hotel Omega Regency, Galle Rd, Colombo 06	XX	01
36	Hotel Sapphire, Galle Rd, Colombo 06	XX	01
37	Hotel Orchid Inn, Galle Rd, Colombo 06	XX	01

**10. Events & Individuals**

S. No.	Details	Sinhala	English
1	English Book launch @ HARTI, Colombo 07 on July 30, 2013	xx	52
2	Sinhala Book Launch @ Mt. Lavinia beach on Ferbruary 08, 2014	07	15
3	Rev. Fr. Irwin Morais, Fr. Superior, De Mazanod House, Colombo 15	01	01
4	Ms. Debra Efroymsen (international and limited local distribution)	xx	58
5	Udan Fernando / Center for Poverty Analysis, Colombo 07 (mostly local distribution)	xx	150
6	Walter Seneviratne, Lecturer, University of Peradeniya, Kandy	xx	01
7	Indika Kahatapitiya, Attorney-at-Law, District Court, Gampaha	01	01
8	Upali Gamakumara, Visiting Lecturer, Sri Lanka Foundation, Colombo 07	xx	01
9	Trevor Wanniachy	10	10
10	Dr. Sudheera Herath, Consultant Surgeon, Karapitiya Teaching Hospital, Galle	01	01
11	H M U Chularatne, Executive Director, Sevanatha U R C, Rajagiriya	01	xx
12	Dr. Jagath Munasinghe, Head, T & C Panning Division, University of Moratuwa	01	01
13	Dr. Chandana Atapattu, Sri Lanka Medical Council, Norris Canal Rd, Colombo	01	01
14	Regional workshop on tobacco control and NCDs, Bangkok (participants from India, Vietnam, Nepal, Bangladesh, Uganda, and Canada, and UNDP in Thailand)	xx	12



Living form, endless differences and deep similarities.

Moments or Monuments

# Borrowed LANDSCAPES

Classic reflecting pond at Stowe Garden in Buckinghamshire, England. Borrowed from the Buddhists?

**Samuel Hammer**

As a biologist I'm aware that few characteristics evolve more than once. The world of plants, my area of study, is so rife with morphological and anatomical similarities I sometimes wonder if there are any significant differences among species in the plant kingdom. We humans share so much in common with the rest of the living world (as shown in our comparative DNA) that our common ancestry with plants, insects, and even fungi and bacteria, is a moot point.

I have pondered landscape form since I was an undergraduate and as it turns out there was no place better to consider landscape questions than in Sri Lanka. My interest in landscape evolution brought me to the Magul Maha Vinhara in a remote corner of your country, where I got to see for myself the trajectory of human yearnings and how they interact with nature. It brought me to the question, "Are landscape ideas shared across cultures, or have they evolved separately in different places?" Like our DNA, do our garden designs come from a single ancestor? In other words, have we been copying you all this time?

My question goes back to a visit some years ago to the

Stowe Landscape Garden in Buckinghamshire, England. Stowe, like many of the premier gardens in the UK, was redesigned several times through its history. Chief among the designers of Stowe was the 18th Century figure Capability Brown, who is counted among the founders of landscape architecture.

We know that Brown had visual knowledge of Eastern gardens because he stated that he was familiar with 'Chinese' garden design. It is doubtful that he ever saw a depiction of a garden from what was to become Sri Lanka. Certainly, he never visited. Yet the qualities that we find in the great reflecting pond at Stowe are

abundantly present in the disused tank at Magul Maha Vinhara and a 100 other places in every corner of your country. Did Magul Maha Vinhara and places like it represent a sort of prototype 'Eastern' garden (one that Capability Brown might have envisioned) or do we humans just like reflecting ponds? No doubt, the shimmering vision of trees reflecting on a lotus-filled sheet of water evokes a universal feeling of meditative well-being. Have we all been building reflecting ponds all along?

My guess is that Brown was influenced by reflecting ponds from your part of the world. I am not a garden historian, but I've seen quite

a few, and from my observations reflecting ponds are absent from earlier formal gardens of Europe. Moats, yes. Fountains, certainly. Naturalistic reflecting pools? Not until intensive contact with East Asia. Where Europeans were putting gardens into four-cornered patches, laying straight paths through lanes of pruned shrubbery, and developing a symmetrical 'physic' of useful plants, you were otherwise engaged.

For one thing, your beneficial plants had been known since time immemorial and were part and parcel of the Ayurvedic scheme. Second, you were using squares, but as enclosures for different concepts. And finally,

your reflecting tanks came out of an ages-old tradition of the *Wewas* and the *Kulams*. Europeans couldn't build reflecting pools like yours because they didn't have the technology until almost 1800. Europeans finally mastered engineering techniques that were old in your corner of the world around the time of the 'Enlightenment' (funny - did they borrow that term from you too?). Meanwhile, designers like Capability Brown sought to bring the grace of your landscape to the richest patrons of Northwestern Europe. But beauty, harmony and peace were part of the everyday working agricultural landscape you invented.



A garden folly at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, near Boston, in a landscape borrowed from you



Reflecting pond at Magul Maha Vinhara near Pothuvil



The working agricultural landscape of Sri Lanka may have inspired high culture of Northwestern Europe

# Public opinion on urban planning

**Dilshan Boange**

Democracy and democratic government can manifest through electoral mechanisms as well as participatory activism on the part of citizenry in matters related to government. An initiative taken by two individuals to provide a research report that will offer government authorities facts and opinions on the topic of public spaces will come to fruition on July 30, at the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute as the co-authors of the report Debra Efroymsen and Udan Fernando bring out the publication *Public Space and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach*.

The research was conceptualized after Debra had heard an address delivered at SLASS by Urban Development Authority (UDA) Additional Secretary (Technical) and Metro Colombo Urban Development Project, Project Director engineer Rohan Seneviratne, on the topic of public spaces and the government's focus on developing public spaces to be in line with the policy drive towards accelerating facilities to foster tourism.

Debra has experience in the area of town planning and public spaces in several Asian countries. Udan is a resident of Mount Lavinia who like Debra is a regular visitor to the Mt. Lavinia beach. They both perceived that this beach shows a functioning public space which is 'self organized' and functions smoothly with hardly any intervention on the part of

State authorities. The study that was developed was under the guidance of Dr. Jagath Munasinghe of the University of Moratuwa who heads the Department of Town and Country Planning. It involved several scientific methods of data collection and analysis.

A group of Moratuwa University students had got involved in helping to carry out the survey in which 371 visitors to the beach had taken part. While a great deal of information was gathered about matters of accessibility to the beach and what transportation modes are used and what purpose brings visitors to the beach, a very noteworthy factor revealed by the study is that the Mt. Lavinia beach has a very high level of safety. The majority stated that the most serious incident they had faced is the theft of slippers.

The study had revealed how the Mt. Lavinia beach is a vibrant space brimming with activity from people of all walks of life. The observations of the study according to its authors show that the beach is never empty at any time of the day. "Public spaces have no boundaries about who goes there. The only way a city can operate well is by having mutual cooperation. Interacting with people is the way. Public spaces facilitate that," said Debra, who along with Udan believes that the place chosen for their study reveals an 'ideal public space' in Sri Lanka. What the report has to offer is surely going to be insightful in terms of understanding the merits of this space and what it offers for public life.

Debra spoke about civic consciousness and how it is a much needed functional element at a public space that creates inclusivity, which is at a notably high level in Mt. Lavinia beach. They said the numerous people from different walks of life who are engaged in different activities that could range from walking to yoga exercises, talking

and playing beach sports all share the beach with mutual respect to the others right to enjoy that space without stepping on each other's toes. There is in that sense an equilibrium and harmony developed in that public space between all users.

"A public space is like an extended living room. Not like what is designated as your living room at home, but the space where you 'live' your life. Like being at home with the community you live around," said Debra.

Public spaces can be either designated through policy or gradually come into being through public usage of a space that is not privately owned. "There are 'scripted spaces' where the design and layout has been planned and built by the authorities and then there are 'unscripted spaces' that gradually come into being over a period of time." The latter is what the Mt. Lavinia beach is and the concept of recognising 'unscripted public spaces' may be something relatively new to our Town Planning.

A stereotypical perception of what 'public spaces are' can lead to policies that could be unfriendly to citizens. Authorities must also be conscious of recognising what successfully functioning as unscripted public spaces and allow them to flourish on their own. "Don't try to 'fix' what isn't broken," said Debra giving insightful phraseology to the argument.

Udan and Debra are of the view that their forthcoming publication will be of value to both the public and policy makers. They are charting ways to disseminate the findings of their study. Putting it online is one intended measure. As a private citizen I hope that a facet of the public's opinion can be communicated through this study to the authorities concerned to take into consideration to achieve citizen-friendly urban planning, and achieve an instance of participatory democracy.



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Sunday, July 28, 2013

## PLUS

### The unscripted beach

By Smriti Daniel

*A place where 'diverse users engaged in diverse activities' Mount Lavinia is case study for social harmony*

View(s): 76

Udan Fernando considers Mount Lavinia beach an extension of his backyard – albeit a very crowded one. 'It's my place to walk, exercise, eat, drink, relax, host friends and 'just be!' writes Udan, noting that he is not the only one. The generosity with which the beach welcomes hundreds of people every day is what he and his research partner Debra Efrogmson most value about it. Rugby players pause their games to allow 'umbrella' lovers to walk by, dogs and their owners mingle along the edge of the surf, fishermen pull in their nets with the help of the odd tourist, families walk up from nearby houses or take the bus from far away, posh eateries and simple vendors do brisk business side by side. Governed spontaneously by those who use it, people of all ages, genders and social contexts feel at home on Mount Lavinia beach – here is a public space in the truest sense.

Their shared love for it led Udan and Debra to consider a case study with the beach as its focus. With the help of eight students from the University of Moratuwa, they studied it exhaustively – noting its demographic and the uses it was put to, who did what, which part of the beach they used and when. They asked 371 beach users question after question – How safe did they feel? What amenities were lacking? How clean was it? How often did they visit the beach and from where did they come? The researchers created bar graphs and tables, breaking it all down statistically, finding objective, factual evidence for what they already knew intuitively – that as a public space Mt. Lavinia beach was really a success story. Their findings are recorded in 'Public Space and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach', a report to be launched this week.

Explaining that she has always been interested in public spaces and how they contribute to wellbeing in cities, Debra writes: 'in my travels I have seen more beautiful beaches, but I prefer Mount Lavinia Beach. It feels real...Mount Lavinia Beach is vibrant, with so much activity, so much life.' Debra, who has an MSc from the Harvard School of Public Health in Population and International Health, is the author of multiple books and reports including 'Public Spaces, How they humanise cities' and 'Making Cities More Liveable'. Udan, who has a PhD in international development cooperation from the University of Amsterdam, is currently a Senior Professional at the Centre for Poverty Analysis in Colombo. Explaining that while they didn't agree on everything Udan says he and Debra both "saw something beautiful, something magical at Mount Lavinia, especially compared to other public spaces."

Debra, who is unwell, is unable to make our interview which is in close proximity to Independence Square. I ask Udan how he feels the two compare. He begins with a disclaimer: "I am not an expert on this at all," says Udan. "I am a simple beach lover and user." After hours spent on the beach, being what research terminology would dub a 'participant observer' Udan says it comes down to planned vs. unplanned, scripted vs. unscripted public spaces. He compares the relative freedom users of Mount Lavinia have with that of say the walking paths in Nugegoda where use is heavily regulated.

"The beauty in Mount Lavinia is that it is unscripted, and the second which is related is that it is self-organised but still there is coordination and harmony between diverse users engaged in diverse activities." (He notes however that the work the Municipality does in cleaning up regularly, the lifeguard tower and the odd police patrol making the rounds are essential.) There is also the issue of ease of access and affordability to people from every socio-economic background – Mount Lavinia offers it, Independence Square does not.

"For us it shows us that it is an inclusive place, certain other places by virtue of how they are designed can become biased to a certain group of people. They become exclusive. At Mount Lavinia, I would say exclusivity is nil and that is something wonderful and rare." He feels this all comes together in a very easy tolerance and social diversity: "You'll see a Muslim woman coming in with an abhaya and 10 metres away is a foreigner lying there in her bikini and nobody is bothered. People just keep going."

However, the beach is not without its drawbacks. Users have said the absence of drinking water, public toilets and changing rooms were a downside to their beach experience. "These are basic amenities that are needed," says Udan, adding that people also still need to embrace better beach etiquette –

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littering is distressingly common for example.

Going forward, as so many parts of the country are undergoing aggressive beautification programmes, what do Udan and Debra believe policy makers can learn from their case study? Accessibility and affordability appear to be key; the rest just takes care of itself. "Mount Lavinia is a best practice," says Udan. "It would be great if policy makers would look at places that are organically public spaces rather than trying to engineer excessively."



Pix by Udan Fernando and Debra Efroymson

**Public space: Mount Lavinia Beach**

Public Space and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach will be launched on July 30 at 4.30 p.m. with a discussion chaired by Prof. Carlo Fonseka with a panel consisting Dr. Jagath Munasinghe, Head, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Moratuwa, Ms. Sunela Jayawardene, Environmental Designer and Eng. Rohan Seneviratne, Additional Secretary (Technical), Urban Development Authority (UDA) and Project Director, Metro Colombo Urban Development Project. The event will take place at the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute on 114, Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7. Call 0779832281 for more information.

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Friday, 12th July 2013



# Daily News

Sri Lanka's National Newspaper Since 1918

Friday, July 12, 2013 (All day)

FEATURES

## Public spaces for the common good

Dilshan Boange



Architecture defines to a great extent 'who' a country's people are in the eyes of an outsider. Although a country which is not even half a millennia old yet, as a nation the founders of the USA had given much through to what their nation will speak to the world through the architecture that stands impressively in their capital -Washington D.C.

Memorialisation is also a very central element in State planned topography that will demarcate 'spaces' for commemoration of what is valued in a country's narrative of its civilisation. What I wish to discuss in this article is to do with what I learnt from a conversation one evening with two persons who are conscious of the need for 'public spaces' that contribute to a community's communal bonding and help improve an individual's mental health. Udan Fernando and Debra Efroymsen are regular visitors to the Mount Lavinia beach and they have seen what great value it has as a 'public space' which functions smoothly with hardly any institutional supervision involved.

After hearing engineer Rohan Seneviratne, Additional Secretary (Technical), Urban Development Authority (UDA) and Project Director, Metro Colombo Urban Development Project at a forum on how the government is now placing emphasis on creating public spaces as part of the post-conflict development plan, Debra had been inspired to make an initiative to do a study on the functional aspect of what would be an ideal public space.

### Social stratification

Together with Udan, the two of them had identified the merits of the Mount Lavinia beach that reveals its idealness as a public space that has come into function without any barriers of class or other forms of social stratification involved. A research study had been embarked upon with the help of Dr. Jagath Munasinghe, Head, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Moratuwa and has now culminated in an upcoming publication titled Public Space and Quality of Life: A Case Study of Mount Lavinia Beach. The report is to be launched on July 30 and what is hoped thereafter is for active dialogue between the authorities to consider various aspects that contribute towards developing successful public spaces.

Can a public space be created through policy decisions or does it get created gradually through nondescript citizens finding a particular geographic location conducive to spend some time away from the tedium of their routine which could be either severely housebound or tied to office work? A public space of course would mean a place that is accessible to all with no entry fee involved or stipulations of

spending for purchases, be it food and beverages or items for kids amusement. Looking at the locations in and around the greater Colombo area one could say that both policy decisions and gradual common communal usage can create public spaces.

#### Urban landscape

Arguably Colombo's best known public space today is the Galle Face green. The dedication of that stretch of land overlooking the sea to the 'Ladies and Children of Colombo' by the British Governor Sir Henry Ward can be seen as possibly the first ever public space being created by a policy decision. Declaring a patch of land as a public space is one thing, but then how does it gain its 'character' in terms of being topographically moulded to suit the urban landscape? This is where active human intervention comes in, which can be either institutional or through gradual public participation that would result in structures coming on the scene.

#### Tourist attractions

Thanks to the present Urban Development Authority, the capital city of Kotte, of which I am a constituent, has today two remarkably spectacular public spaces, located in Kotte near the Diyawannawa and in Nugegoda. These are not only used and appreciated by the joggers and walkers but also families and youth who find great respite being in the salubrious settings. I was made ware by Debra that spaces such as these in the jargon related to town and city planning are called 'scripted public spaces' whereas a place like the Mount Lavinia beach would qualify to the definition of 'unscripted public spaces'.

With our growing schemes of urbanisation the need for public spaces to ensure citizens have spaces that have good accessibility and with the right 'ingredients' that facilitate a calm and safe environment to relax their minds is a need that cannot be negated.

From my point of view with the bolstered policy decisions to promote tourism round the country that now includes the greater Colombo area shaping most potential spaces in a touristy glow to serve as tourist attractions may not necessarily serve the needs of the citizens of that locale.

Gaggles of camera clad tourists clicking their cameras at the landscape where citizens are enjoying some quality leisure time can be irritating to those who value their privacy and appreciate the harmonious ambience that helps find peace of mind.

The government of the day is achieving remarkable strides in terms of urban planning and city beautification. These are the fruits of defeating a three decade long separatist war that crippled our chances to enhance public life. But the pursuit of economic goals must be realised through policies that are integrated with the needs for 'citizens' wellness' that is outside the scope of economic well being.

Through hearing the pulse of the citizenry and dialoguing to realise their aspirations in terms of workable, salutary urban topography beneficial to all, the administrators and constituents will surely further the goals of 'people's government'.

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